



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

JUL - 1 2009

Honorable Rita Sablan
Commissioner of Education
CNMI Public School System
P.O. Box 501370
Saipan, MP 96950

Dear Commissioner Sablan:

This is to inform you that we have conditionally approved the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands' (CNMI's) application for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2009 funds under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Our conditional approval is based on our review of the application submitted by the CNMI Public School System (PSS) to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), on May 11, 2009 and amended on June 11, 2009, including policies, procedures, methods, descriptions, assurances, certifications, and submission statement provided in Section II, and incorporated by reference to this letter as Enclosure A. In addition, PSS provided the following specific assurances that it will:

1. Operate consistent with the Part C requirements in 20 U.S.C. 1431 through 1444 and applicable regulations in 34 CFR Part 303;
2. Ensure that the statewide system of early intervention services required by Part C and its implementing regulations is in effect in CNMI throughout the FFY 2009 grant period; and
3. Make such changes to, and submit, as necessary, for OSEP's approval, the State's policies, procedures, methods, and descriptions as are necessary to bring those policies, procedures, methods and descriptions into compliance with the requirements of Part C of the IDEA, and applicable regulations, as soon as possible, and not later than the earlier of the date indicated by the State in Section II of its application or June 30, 2010. Section II of the State's application identifies the IDEA requirements for which the State needs to amend any policies, procedures, methods and descriptions and the timelines by which the State will amend its policies, procedures, methods and descriptions in order to comply with Part C and applicable regulations. Within Section II, the State has included for each requirement that it cannot meet at this time, the date by which it expects to complete necessary changes associated with any policies, procedures, methods and descriptions that are not yet in compliance with the requirements of Part C and applicable regulations.

The conditional approval for CNMI's FFY 2009 Part C grant is also based on CNMI's assurance, dated May 5, 2009, from the CNMI PSS in which it specifically assured that CNMI shall:

1. Make all changes necessary to CNMI's interagency agreement between the CNMI PSS and the Department of Public Health consistent with Part C requirements as specified in OSEP's April 26, 2006 Memorandum to CNMI to comply with Part C requirements, including 34 CFR §§303.12(d)(15); 303.148(b)(2)-(4); 303.321(e)(2); 303.322(e)(1); 303.342(a); 303.344(d); 303.523(b) and (c)(2)(ii); 303.524; and 303.525; and the following 2004 amendments to IDEA: Sections 602(1)(B); 632(4)(E)(iii); 634(1); 635(a)(2); 637(a)(6); and 637(a)(9)(A)(ii)(II) and

submit to OSEP the revised and executed interagency agreement as soon as it is finalized, but no later than June 30, 2010;

2. Ensure that, throughout the period that CNMI uses its FFY 2009 grant funds under Part C of IDEA, all early intervention service programs and providers in CNMI will comply with all requirements of Part C of IDEA, including 34 CFR §§303.12(d)(15); 303.148(b)(2)-(4); 303.321(c)(2); 303.322(e)(1); 303.342(a); 303.344(d); 303.523(b) and (c)(2)(ii); 303.524; and 303.525; and the following 2004 amendments to IDEA: Sections 602(1)(B); 632(4)(E)(iii); 634(1); 635(a)(2); 637(a)(6); and 637(a)(9)(A)(ii)(II);
3. Provide OSEP with a copy of the memorandum notifying all early intervention service programs and providers that are part of CNMI's Part C early intervention system of any changes that affect the provision of early intervention services under Part C, including 34 CFR §§303.12(d)(15); 303.148(b)(2)-(4); 303.321(e)(2); 303.322(e)(1); 303.342(a); 303.344(d); 303.523(b) and (c)(2)(ii); 303.524; and 303.525; and the following 2004 amendments to IDEA: Sections 602(1)(B); 632(4)(E)(iii); 634(1); 635(a)(2); 637(a)(6); and 637(a)(9)(A)(ii)(II); and
4. Ensure that the statewide system of early intervention required by Part C of IDEA in 20 U.S.C. 1431-1444 and applicable regulations in 34 CFR Part 303 will be in effect throughout the FFY 2009 grant period.

CNMI's FFY 2009 IDEA Part C grant is subject to Special Conditions identified in the U.S. Department of Education's June 24, 2009 letter to CNMI, which is Enclosure B to this grant letter. By accepting the enclosed grant award, CNMI expressly agrees to comply with the terms identified in Enclosure B.

Please note that as part of CNMI's application for FFY 2009, CNMI has made an assurance, in 34 CFR §80.11(c), that it will comply with all applicable Federal statutes and regulations in effect with respect to the FFY 2009 grant period. Any changes made by CNMI to its FFY 2009 application or Part C policies or procedures that are application requirements, after OSEP approval, must meet the applicable public participation requirements under Part C in 34 CFR §§303.110 through 303.113 and, if they are requirements under Section II.A, must also be submitted to, and approved by, OSEP prior to CNMI's implementation of its new or revised application, policies and procedures.

Enclosed is CNMI's regular grant award for funds currently available under the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 for the Part C program. These funds are for use primarily in 2009-2010 and are available for obligation by States from July 1, 2009 through September 30, 2011 in accordance with 34 CFR §76.709.

In addition to these regular FFY 2009 Part C funds, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provided a one-time large increment in IDEA Part C funding. The ARRA IDEA Part C grants are a supplemental appropriation to the regular IDEA Part C appropriation. The first 50 percent of the ARRA IDEA Part C funds was awarded to CNMI on April 1, 2009 and the second 50 percent will be available to CNMI by September 30, 2009. Please note that each State and Territory will be required to submit additional information that addresses how the State or Territory will meet the accountability and reporting requirements in section 1512 of the ARRA before it will be considered eligible to receive the second 50 percent of the ARRA funds. Together, CNMI's regular FFY 2009 IDEA funds and its ARRA IDEA Part C funds constitute CNMI's total FFY 2009 Part C allocation.

Given the increased IDEA Part C FFY 2009 allocation to each State and Territory, States and Territories may wish to review carefully the guidance on the ARRA IDEA Part C grant awards, available at <http://www.ed.gov/fund/data/award/idea/arra/index.html>.

Section 604 of the IDEA provides that “[a] State shall not be immune under the eleventh amendment to the Constitution of the United States from suit in Federal court for a violation of this Act.” Section 606 provides that each recipient of assistance under IDEA make positive efforts to employ and advance in employment qualified individuals with disabilities in programs assisted under the IDEA. Therefore, by accepting this grant, CNMI is expressly agreeing as a condition of IDEA funding to a waiver of Eleventh Amendment immunity and to ensuring that positive efforts are made to employ and advance employment of qualified individuals with disabilities in programs assisted under the IDEA.

The enclosed grant award for FFY 2009 is made with the continued understanding that this Office may, from time to time, require clarification of information within your application, if necessary. These inquiries are needed to allow us to appropriately carry out our administrative responsibilities related to Part C.

We appreciate your ongoing commitment to the provision of quality early intervention services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Patricia J. Guard".

Patricia J. Guard
Acting Director
Office of Special Education Programs

Enclosures

Enclosure A
Enclosure B

cc: Part C Coordinator